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CHINA/USSR: BESSMERTNYKH VISIT TO BEIJING

Soviet Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh will make a March 31-April 2 working visit to Beijing after an official visit to Japan, according to press reports.

Comment: Bessmertnykh's visit will be the first to Beijing by a Soviet foreign minister since Gorbachev's May 1989 Beijing summit; former Foreign Minister Shevardnadze met PRC Foreign Minister Qian five times in 1990, always at border cities or international conferences. As illustrated by the tone of Premier Li Peng's remarks at the ongoing National People's Congress, the PRC has adopted a low-key, grudgingly positive stance toward improving Sino-Soviet relations. Though privately wary about Soviet domestic political trends, the Chinese are intent on improving relations in a step-by-step, cautious manner. Outstanding issues are a long-bruited Soviet sale of Su-27 fighters to China and the timing of party chief Jiang Zemin's prospective visit to Moscow.

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(For related information, see Analysis page 8.)

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